2000 STUDENT SUPPORT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

TERRITORIAL REPORT

Education, Culture & Employment

102-02136/

A Message from the Minister

During the 1999-2000 school year, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment conducted extensive research in the area of student support. We listened to educators from all schools in the Northwest Territories. This report represents the results of the research from the Student Support Needs Assessment.

Our philosophy recognizes and values diversity which is beneficial for all children. This research helps us to gauge how well we are achieving our goals and to identify where we need to improve our efforts. Specifically, the goals of this project were to:

- gather data on all NWT students at the classroom level regarding supports individual students need to enhance their learning
- gather data on NWT schools about practices and procedures they have in place to provide supports to students
- compare the data gathered in 1999 with similar data from 1993.

This Student Support Needs Assessment Report is significant in many ways. The research will help to substantiate the needs of students in the NWT. It will also provide feedback about student needs to each jurisdiction as well as an overall picture of what supports and services are required to meet the needs of all our students. This information will be helpful in planning for the future of education in the NWT.

The Student Support Needs Assessment strongly indicates that NWT jurisdictions, schools and teachers have made significant progress since 1993 in addressing the needs of all students. This report will help us strengthen our schools and improve our ability to meet the needs of our children.

Jake Ootes

Hon. Jake Ootes
Minister, Education, Culture and Employment

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Executive Summary

Purpose of the Needs Assessment

The Student Support Needs Assessment was conducted to determine the following:

- what supports students were receiving
- who is providing these supports, and where
- the gaps between the level of need and level of supports being provided
- how the situation has changed since 1993, when similar information was collected
- which students are most difficult for schools to support
- which students have special needs, and what those needs are
- what practices and procedures are in place at a school level to provide supports for students.

Supports Provided to Students

Information was gathered on 9,619 students in the NWT school system. Teachers provided this information through interviews, each of which lasted from one to one and a half hours. In addition, the principal/school administrative team was interviewed about student support practices and procedures in place in the school. Regional staff also provided written submissions in response to some general questions about student support across schools in the division.

Teachers reported that 61% of students were receiving one or more supports to assist them in meeting their educational goals. A support is an additional service or device provided in or to the school for an individual or a small group of students. These supports are above and beyond those provided to all students as part of the regular school program. The support most often provided was program modification to accommodate difficulty in learning. This type of support was provided to 30% of all students. One quarter of the school population also received small group instruction.

There has been a marked increase in the proportion of students receiving support in 2000, compared with those receiving support in 1993. In that year, support was provided to 29% of students overall.

In spite of the substantial increase in supports currently provided, compared to 1993 levels, teachers report that more support is required. Thirty-one percent (31%) of students who are not now receiving support are identified as requiring some level of support. Furthermore, some students currently receiving support require additional supports.

If supports were provided to all students needing them, 73% of the student population would be receiving some level of support compared to the 61% currently being served.

Who Provides Support

Teachers are the primary providers of support in the classroom. However, they receive a variety of paid and volunteer assistance including parents and community volunteers. The education/support assistant is the most significant source of professional support to the classroom teacher. Approximately two-thirds (64%) of classroom teachers are assisted by at least one education/support assistant. These assistants spend an average of 12 hours per week in the classroom. However, less than 10% of classrooms had an education/support assistant working full-time in the classroom.

Priorities for Student Support

Teachers reported that their highest priority for providing student support in their school was the availability of trained classroom support staff. They placed great emphasis on the importance of training for support staff, rather than on the sheer increase in the number of staff available. Following are the top five priorities for student support presented by teachers:

1. Trained classroom support staff
2. Counsellors in the school
3. Reduced class size or lower pupil/teacher ratio
4. Program Support Teacher (PST)
5. Parental support to students.

Beyond these top five priorities, teachers also identified several other areas of concern that needed to be addressed. Foremost among these were student behaviour, attendance and tardiness. Teachers also called for increased emphasis to be placed on reading/literacy programs and for early childhood intervention programs. Early intervention programs include preschool programs as well as programs in the primary grades.

Teachers recognized a range of issues which confront students outside the classroom but which nonetheless influence their school performance. They noted that family related issues such as family breakdown, serious illness and death were those most frequently faced by their students. Having to deal with substance abuse in the home and in the community at large also presents a challenge for many students.

Support from Community Agencies and Professionals

Teachers need the support of individuals and agencies in the community to help meet the needs of their students. This survey indicates that outside of the city of Yellowknife, few services are available locally for assessments, specialized medical and psychological services and speech and language services. Teachers reported that limited access to these support services places significant constraints on the ability of schools to meet student needs.

Special Needs Students

As a result of this survey, it is estimated that students with special needs comprise 8.3% of the 1999/2000 student enrolment. This group is comprised of all students who are currently on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) (approximately 4% of the student population) and those students who have been diagnosed with conditions that require them to receive assistance but who are not currently on Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Such assistance may include speech and language therapy, services for the hard of hearing and deaf, services for the visually impaired and blind, as well as assistance with personal care.

Students Requiring the Most Time, Energy and Resources

The range of supports provided in the classroom varies widely. It could include, amongst others, homework and tutorial assistance or assistance with personal care. It could also require the implementation of an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which is generally the means by which students with special needs are ensured of receiving an education that is appropriate for them. A class of students may include those who require no support as well as those requiring multiple supports.

Teachers were asked to identify those students within their classes who required the most time, energy and resources to support. Based on the survey results, these students, who comprise 30% of

the student population, as a group exhibit characteristics that are different from those of their peers. A substantially larger proportion of these students are males. They were more likely to be placed on an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and to be receiving three or more supports. In addition, of the supports they received, individual behavioural intervention was provided at a rate four times that of other students. An additional challenge presented by these students is that their teachers judge that nearly three-quarters (75%) of them still require additional supports. The majority of students requiring the most time, energy and resources to support are not students with special needs, although some are.

Reporting the Findings

In addition to this Territorial Report, the following additional information will also be available:

- A Technical Report will present complete summary data based on all the responses to the Classroom Profile and the School/Community Profile, and a summary of the submissions made by each DEC/DEA.
- Jurisdictional data will be provided to each DEC/DEA in a format similar to that of the Territorial Report.

Conclusions

The Student Support Needs Assessment strongly indicates that NWT educational jurisdictions, schools and teachers have made significant progress since 1993 in providing for the diverse needs of students. A substantial proportion of the student body is receiving some type of support. This includes those students who have special needs. However, the need for increased levels of, and improved effectiveness of, these supports is evident. The survey has identified the need for the provision of supports at the classroom level as well as at the community level to meet the needs of all students.

Next Steps

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment will use the data gathered in the Student Support Needs Assessment as the foundation for future planning for student support.

Context of the Needs Assessment

Background: Development of a Student Support System

Historically, there was a tendency to view students with 'special needs' as the only ones requiring supports and services to help them overcome barriers to their learning and to enhance their development. The "regular" students were considered to be those who did not require supports. Over the past 20 years, the education system in the NWT has shifted from identifying only a few students considered to have 'special needs' and recommending a separate type of education for them, to identifying the support needs of all students and educating all students in inclusive classrooms and schools. In the former approach, special education was distinct from regular education and often involved segregation of the students from their peers or, in some cases, residential placement. Gradually, education policy and practice evolved through:

- the Special Committee on Education of 1982, which recommended integrating all children into regular classrooms
- the Departmental Directive and Guidelines on Special Needs Education of 1986, with designated funding for special needs education
- the Departmental Directive on Inclusive Schooling in 1993
- the mandate of inclusive schooling in the *Education Act* and regulations of 1995 and 1996.

The current system of **inclusive education** views students' needs along a continuum from those who require enriched programs, through those who require no extra supports above those offered in classrooms to all students, to those requiring various types and intensities of program adaptation and support services. The students traditionally regarded as those with 'special needs' are found at one end of this continuum and represent a relatively small proportion of the student population whose needs are significantly different from those of their peers and who may require an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and ongoing, intensive, and often specialized support services.

Inclusive education addresses the reality that students in today's classrooms bring with them diverse learning and personal needs to

which the school must respond if students are to achieve their educational goals. All students may need additional support at some time during their education. The level of support may vary over time and will vary from student to student, with some students requiring only short-term services while others require ongoing support and/or significant program adaptations. More specifically:

- *"any* student may require support services at some time in their schooling
- *several* students will require additional support at various stages of their schooling
- *some* students will not be able to access or participate in schooling without a constant level of support
- *fewer* students require a level and type of support service that the school system cannot provide on its own"
  (Student Support Services Information System: Classroom and School – Community Profiles, 1993).

It is the ongoing challenge of the education system to identify all students' needs and to respond to them with appropriate educational programming, teaching strategies and support services so that each student's development and learning will be enhanced. Educators believe that this task cannot be done alone. The support of parents/guardians and community members and agencies is essential.

Definitions

Support

A support is an additional service or device provided in or to the school for individual or small groups of students. **Supports are services above and beyond those provided to all students as part of the regular school program.** The purpose of providing one or more supports to a student would be to enhance development or help that individual overcome barriers to learning. A few examples of supports include:

- program modifications for difficulty in learning, or for enrichment
- programming assistance such as small group instruction, or an Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- additional assistance with classwork, or homework
- assessment services
- rehabilitative and medical services such as occupational therapy

or speech/language therapy
- personal assistance including specialized equipment
- counselling to improve attendance, or to deal with personal issues

Inclusive Schooling

Inclusive Schooling begins with the belief that students belong with their peers and should have equal access to educational opportunities. It is concerned with the support needs of all students. In practice, inclusive schooling translates into finding ways to include *all* students in our schools and to meet their unique needs through:

- a belief that all children and youth can learn together
- a team approach to addressing student needs
- learning opportunities that build on students' strengths and respond to students' needs
- programs that can be adapted and modified to provide a variety of learning opportunities
- resources for materials, training, staffing and support services
- ongoing staff development in knowledge and skills related to meeting diverse student needs
- the facilitation of the involvement of parents/guardians in their children's education.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

An Individual Education Plan is a comprehensive, written educational plan with stated objectives based on a student's strengths and needs. IEPs are typically written when:

- a student's physical, intellectual or social/emotional needs are significantly different from those of his/her peers
- a student requires significantly different individualized program goals (e.g. learning life skills).

The IEP is based on the specific strengths and needs of the individual student. It outlines long-term and short-term learning goals and objectives, learning activities and materials, and assessment/evaluation strategies appropriate to the specific needs of the student and different from those of his/her peers.

Student with 'Special Needs'

Students with 'special needs' are those students who, in order to maximize their learning, require specialized support services and/or significant program adaptations that are different from their

peers and beyond what is provided to all students in the school. Students with 'special needs' most often, but not always, have Individual Education Plans typically determined by assessment.

Purpose of the Student Support Needs Assessment

The Student Support Needs Assessment was designed to gather data on all NWT students at the classroom level. More specifically, the Needs Assessment was designed to determine:

- what supports students are receiving
- who is providing these supports, and where
- the gaps between the level of need and the level of supports being provided
- how the situation has changed since 1993, when similar information was collected
- which students are most difficult for schools to support
- which students have special needs, and what those needs are
- what practices and procedures are in place at a school level to provide supports for students.

Rationale

In general terms, it is important for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to document the needs of the students it serves for a variety of reasons, including being able to:

- make informed decisions about educational policy and the use of resources
- substantiate the need for resources of all kinds
- describe and answer questions about characteristics of the NWT student population, specifically the support needs to which schools must respond
- respond to the *Minister's Forum on Education (1999)* which recommended that "a major research project should be undertaken to determine the number of children with special needs, and to gain a better understanding of the range of needs that are evident in NWT schools"
  (Minister's Forum Report, 1999).

Methodology

Overview

Data were collected:

- at the *classroom level* by interviewing classroom teachers about the support needs of each student in the class (Classroom Profile – Appendix A)
- at the *school level* by interviewing the principal/school administrative team about support practices and procedures in place in the school (School/Community Profile – available in Technical Report)
- at the *divisional* level by inviting written submissions to broad, open-ended questions about student supports across the division (available in Technical Report).

Data were collected on 9,169 students in all seven NWT school divisions, in all 48 public and public denominational schools. The number of students represents all NWT students registered in schools as of the date of data collection.

Instrument Design

The focus of the Classroom Profile was on gathering information on the supports students need, rather than on tabulating incidence of specific exceptionalities or labelling of students.

The starting point for the development of both the Classroom Profile and the School/Community Profile was to review and improve upon instruments used in 1993 to collect similar data. The most significant change was to gather data using an interview, rather than a self-administered questionnaire.

Based on the result of three focus group sessions, the Classroom Profile and School/Community Profile were revised and a procedure was developed to gather data at a divisional level.

The revised Classroom and School/Community Profiles were piloted in five classrooms in schools representing the variety of schools in the NWT – large/small, urban/settlement, elementary/secondary.

Data Collection

Interviewers travelled in teams to all public and public denominational schools with more than 150 students. Telephone interviews were conducted with schools having enrolments of 150 or fewer students.

The Classroom Profile was completed by a trained interviewer during an interview with a classroom teacher. Interviewers guided teachers through the questionnaire and recorded their responses. The teachers' task was to share their knowledge of their students' support needs and the degree to which those needs were being met. While each student in a given class was considered and discussed, the names of students were not retained by the interviewer.

The School/Community Profile, which was designed to gather information about supports and procedures in place at a school level, was completed by the school administrative team and responses were reviewed during a follow-up interview. Schools were asked, for example, about the number and type of personnel they had on staff, whether they had any alternative programs, whether they had breakfast/lunch/snack programs, how they accessed assessment services and who was available outside the school to provide support to their students.

At the end of each interview, respondents were asked to identify actions or priorities for student support in their school. They also indicated what they thought would have the biggest impact on the school's ability to meet the diverse needs of students and enhance their learning.

A number of steps were taken to facilitate understanding of the Student Support Needs Assessment generally, and data collection specifically. Letters were sent to each superintendent/director, principal and teachers to explain the purpose and procedures of the project. Interviewers made follow-up phone calls to principals to answer questions and confirm interview schedules. Before beginning data collection at each school, a staff meeting was held, if possible, to again briefly explain the project and answer any questions teachers might have.

Sampling

The Student Support Needs Assessment was intended to collect data on all NWT students. From kindergarten to grade 9, this could be accomplished fairly easily by interviewing classroom teachers. When students spend most or all of their school day with one teacher, it is clear that this person knows the students best and can give the information required.

However, at the high school level, because students interact with more than one teacher, it is necessary to talk to two or more teachers in order to get a full picture of their needs for supports. In smaller community high schools this could be accomplished by talking to a few teachers about all the students in grade 10, for example. But in the five largest high schools, because of the number of teachers and individualized student timetables, it was logistically impossible to gather data on all students without significant and unacceptable disruption to the operation of the school.

It was decided therefore to sample students in these schools. The GNWT Bureau of Statistics drew a random sample of students based on enrolments submitted to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment in September 1999.

Data Processing

The GNWT Bureau of Statistics created computerized data files of all questionnaire data and produced the response frequencies and cross tabulation tables on which this report is based.

Limitations

The methodology employed in the 2000 survey was a clear improvement over that of the 1993 study in providing more complete and substantive data. Based on unsolicited comments from teachers and other school personnel as well as "debriefing" sessions among the interviewers, the procedures appeared to have been successful in soliciting accurate information as perceived by teachers and school administrative staff. There are, however, some cautions to be observed in interpreting the results of the needs assessment and in making comparisons with the 1993 data.

- No reliability checks were conducted to determine whether data gathered from the same interviewee by more than one interviewer were consistent.
- The survey did not attempt to collect information on the students who may have left school between September 30, 1999 when the initial student enrolments were reported and when the survey was conducted.
- Students attending private schools or being home-schooled were not included in the survey.
- Comparisons between the 1993 and 2000 survey results are constrained by the fact that 1993 data include information on students, schools and communities which are now part of the

Nunavut Territory and are therefore not reflected in the 2000 data. In addition, the data gathering methodologies and the actual questions asked are, in some instances, different enough to merit caution in comparing results. These will be highlighted in appropriate sections of the report.

Survey Findings

Context

Students in schools in the NWT number almost 10,000. Data was gathered on 9,619 students from kindergarten to grade 12 in 48 schools in 32 communities. Eleven (11) schools in Yellowknife have 39% of the student population. Students in the eight schools in the regional centres of Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik represent 26% of the student population. The remaining 35% of students attend 30 schools in 29 smaller communities.

In addition to assessing the students' specific needs for support and the supports/services in place for them, some data gathered and derived about the student population may be used to describe the context of the classrooms of the NWT:

- the student population is 52% male and 48% female
- the distribution of students across grade levels is 7% in kindergarten, 24% in grades 1-3, 21% in grades 4-6, 15% in grades 7-9 and 26% in grades 10-12
- another 6% are in multi-grade classes which do not fit these categories.

Class size is a significant organizational feature of schools. The large majority of kindergarten to grade 9 students (44%) are taught in classes of 20 to 24 students. Approximately equal proportions of students are in classes of fewer than 20 students (27%) or classes having more than 25 students (28%).

Attendance at school plays a significant role in students' academic achievements and also in the potential effectiveness of any supports put in place for a student. Across all schools surveyed, teachers reported that 71% of students attended school over 80% of the time. Over one-quarter of the student population attends less than 80% of the time, missing on average one or two days of school a week. The most common reasons for not attending were reported by teachers to be "student chooses not to attend" and "lack of support at home".

Concerns regarding the effect of student attendance on achievement are not confined to whether students come to school or not. Teachers report that tardiness (coming to school late) is an

issue for nearly one-quarter (24%) of the school population. Teachers point out that a pattern of chronic lateness can be almost as detrimental to student performance as failing to attend school.

Parental or guardian involvement is another factor considered by educators to contribute to students' successful learning. Teachers reported that parental involvement was "very appropriate" for 41% of students and "somewhat appropriate" for another 29%. Parents were reported to be "under-involved" for 25% of students.

Students bring many personal skills with them to the classroom which assist them in their learning and in relationships with their peers and school staff. Traditionally, the expectation has been that these skills will be developed in most students to a level appropriate for their age. Teachers were asked to report on any students in their classrooms whose skills were below age expectations. Significant numbers of students were identified as performing below expectations on the identified skills (Table 1).

Table 1
Percent of Students Performing Below Age Expectations – Personal Skills
Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000

Personal Skills	% of Students
Organizing Work	40
Focusing and Staying on Task	44
Relating to Others	27
Anger Management	23
Problem Solving and Decision-making	39

Educators are all too well aware that the personal concerns which students bring to the classroom have a profound influence on their school performance. An awareness of these concerns enables the teacher to better tailor the educational encounter to facilitate learning, but in addition may demand that these concerns be dealt with in their own right for the total well-being of the student. In response to the interview question: "What are some of the issues that your students come to class with?", teachers call attention to a number of issues of which they are aware. Responses are based on classroom needs as a whole and not on individual student situations.

- Responses which were classified as dealing with "Family Stressors" were the most frequently cited by teachers (54% of

classrooms). Among concerns identified in this category were family breakdown, illness and death.

- Following closely behind "Family Stressors" in overall frequency of response (47%) was substance abuse in the family, home and community. This was distinct from substance abuse by students themselves, which although identified as a concern, was much less frequently identified.
- Concerns, classified as "Parenting", encompass such perceived family issues as expectations, structure, controls and support in the home. On average, these concerns, as well as hunger and lack of sleep, were presented by 25% of teachers overall (Table 2).

It must be noted that the context information discussed above provides a picture of the territories as a whole. With few exceptions, the data presented throughout this report could be organized and analyzed to explore the influence of different variables of interest. These might include type of community, gender, class size or grade level, for example. A Technical Report will be available which presents the data in a format that will permit further analyses. This will contribute to a more complete understanding of the factors which play a significant role in the NWT education system.

Table 2
Issues Students Bring to Class as Identified by Teachers
Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000

Issues	% Cited by Teachers
Family Stressors (breakdown, illness, suicide)	54
Addictions/Substance Abuse (home/family/community)	47
Parenting (expectations, controls, support)	32
Hunger	30
Lack of Sleep	28

Supports Provided to Students and Additional Supports Needed

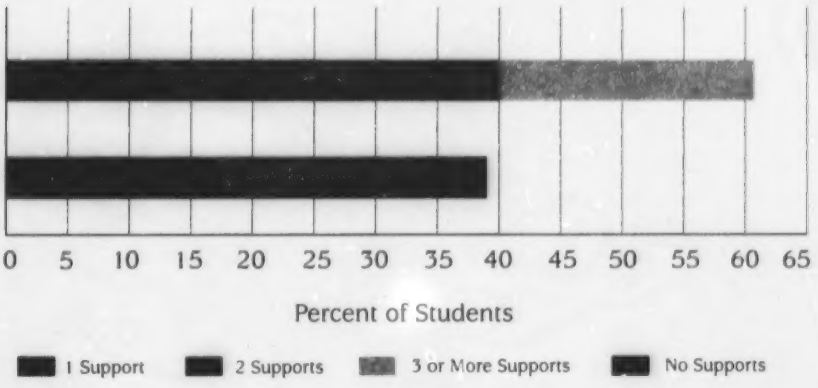
The Student Support Needs Assessment was designed to examine the extent of the need for student support and the degree to which this need is currently being met. Another purpose was to determine the types and range of supports provided to students in all NWT schools. The primary means for doing this was the Classroom Profile (Appendix A). Teachers had the opportunity to indicate the services and supports needed and being provided for each student in all but five schools. These were the largest high

schools. A sampling method was used (see Methodology) in these schools and the results extrapolated.

Also of interest in this survey were the changes that had taken place in student support since similar information was gathered in 1993. This was also the year in which the department began the implementation of the Inclusive Schooling policy and directives that marked a departure from the view that only students with special needs required support. Consequently, it could be anticipated that teachers would be providing supports to meet a broader range of student needs than was previously the case.

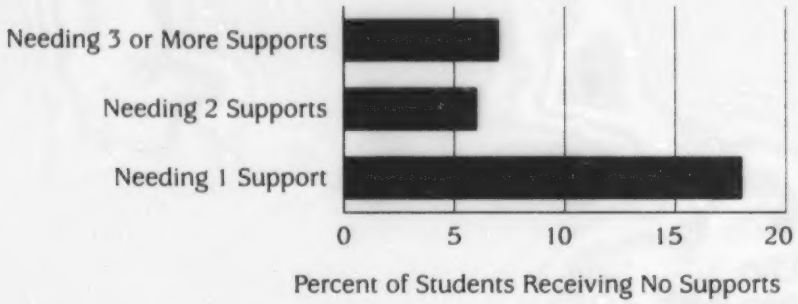
Of the 9,619 students for whom data were collected, 61% of them were receiving some type and level of support. One-quarter (25%) of all students received one support, 15% received two supports, while three or more supports were provided to 21% of students. Figure 1, below, shows the proportion of students receiving different levels of support.

Figure 1
Percent of Students Receiving Supports
Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000



Teachers reported that of the 3,734 students currently receiving no extra supports 1,145 or approximately one-third of them (31%) require some support. The number of supports needed by these students is shown in Figure 2. If these students had been receiving the support teachers indicated they needed, the proportion of the student population receiving some level of support would rise to 73%.

Figure 2
Support Needs of Students Not Currently Receiving Supports
Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000



Even among those students currently receiving support, the need for additional supports existed (Figure 3). Students currently receiving three or more supports were more likely to be identified as requiring additional supports. Figure 3 shows the additional supports needed by students currently receiving different levels of support.

Figure 3
Additional Supports Needed
by Students Currently Receiving Supports
Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000

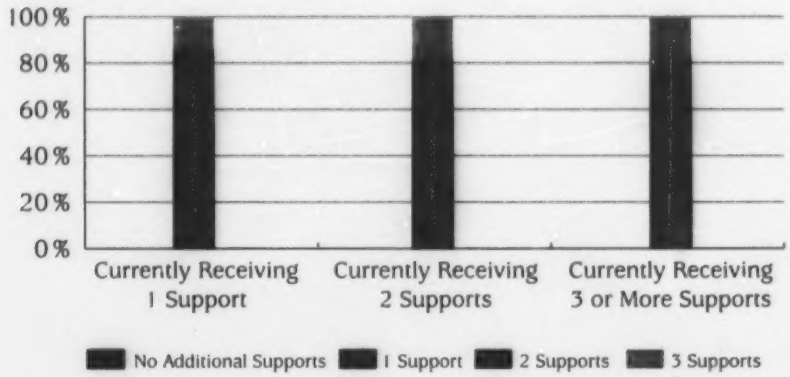


Figure 4
Teachers' Rating of Adequacy of Supports
Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000

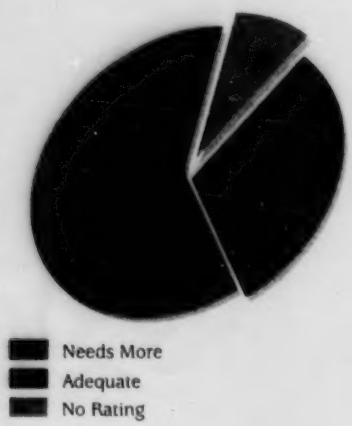
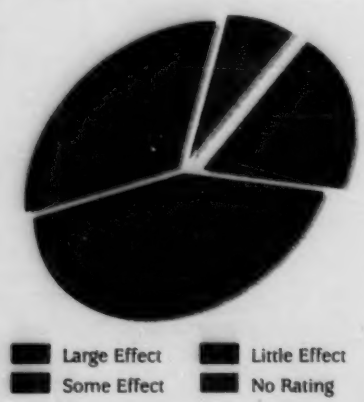


Figure 5
Teachers' Ratings of Effectiveness of Supports
Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000



Adequacy and Effectiveness of Supports Provided

Teachers reported not only on the supports being provided to students but also rated 1) the degree to which supports were adequate and 2) the effectiveness of the support.

The ratings for adequacy were 1, "adequate support for progress in learning" and 2, "needs more of what is in place".

Figure 4 shows the distribution of ratings of adequacy of support.

- a "1" rating was given to 31% of all students receiving support
- a "2" rating was assigned to the support provided to 60% of these students
- no rating was provided for the remaining 9% of students

Figure 5 shows the distribution of ratings of effectiveness of supports.

The effectiveness of support was rated according to the following three categories: A = large effect on student progress, B = some effect on student progress and C = little effect on student progress.

- in 61% of cases, supports were judged to have had at least some effect
- nineteen percent (19%) received "A" ratings
- 42% received "B" ratings
- teachers assigned "C" ratings in 30% of cases, indicating that interventions have "little effect" on student progress

Comparisons with 1993 Survey

Between 1993 and 2000, substantial changes appear to have taken place in student support in NWT schools. There has been a twofold increase in the proportion of students receiving some level of support, a reported 61% in NWT schools in 2000, compared to an estimated 29% across the NWT and Nunavut in 1993. There also appears to have been an increase in the proportion of students needing additional supports. In the 1993 survey, additional support was required but not received by 32% of the students in the NWT and Nunavut. In the current survey, teachers reported that 46% of students needed supports that they were not currently receiving. In the 1993 survey, it was estimated that of the total number of students requiring various levels of support, approximately one-half were actually being supported. In contrast, in the 2000 survey, teachers reported

that of the total number of students requiring support, approximately 80% of them are receiving some level of support.

While there has been a significant increase in the percentage of the school population benefiting from some level of support, this was not accompanied by a lower rating of adequacy of the support. In fact, teachers recorded a slight increase in their rating of adequacy of support to 30%, five percentage points higher than was recorded in 1993.

There were no ratings of effectiveness in 1993 to provide a basis for comparison with the 2000 data. However, it should be noted that in the majority of cases (61%), interventions were judged to be having either a "large effect" or "some effect". These ratings can serve as a baseline for future research on student support.

Students Receiving and Requiring Specific Types of Supports

Not only is there a large segment of the student population receiving some form of support, a wide range of support services is offered in the schools. For each type of support presented in the Classroom Profile, teachers were asked to report whether the student was currently receiving that support or service or whether the student needed the support but was not receiving it. Table 3 shows the proportion of students requiring each support and those receiving it. **The proportion of students requiring support includes those who are receiving the support and those needing but not currently receiving the support.**

Comparisons with 1993 Survey

Although the supports reported on in the 2000 Needs Assessment were not identical to those in 1993, there is nevertheless sufficient similarity to permit some comparisons.

1993 Survey – Highest Support Demands

31% – Small group instruction

23% – Personal counselling

19% – Individual instruction

Approximately one-half of the students requiring these supports were receiving them.

Table 3

Students Requiring and Students Receiving Specific Support

Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000

Type of Support	Requiring Support	(%)	Receiving Support	(%)
Program Modification				
Individual Education Plan	580	6	343	4
Program Modification (Difficulty)	3,205	33	2,844	30
Program Modification (Enrichment)	946	10	768	8
Assistance with Classwork and Homework				
Small Group Instruction/Work	3,169	33	2,444	25
Individual Instruction/Work	3,098	32	2,164	22
Work Experience/Life Skills Training	1,288	13	361	4
Tutorial/Homework Assistance	3,231	34	1,135	12
Counselling and Behavioural Intervention				
Attendance Counselling	2,123	22	879	9
Planned Behavioural Intervention (Individuals)	1,857	19	720	7
Planned Behavioural Intervention (Group)	774	8	289	3
Specialized Rehabilitation and Medical Services				
Speech and Language Therapy	896	9	442	5
Occupational Therapy	230	2	90	1
Physiotherapy	57	1	26	< 1
Services for Hard of Hearing/Deaf	83	1	38	< 1
Services for Visually Impaired/Blind	153	2	53	1
Other Specialized Medical Services	56	1	28	< 1
Homecare	22	< 1	-	-
Other	20	< 1	14	< 1
Personal Assistance and Special Equipment				
Assistance with Personal Care	71	1	53	1
Assistance with Mobility	12	< 1	12	< 1
Mobility Aid (Wheelchair)	4	< 1	4	< 1
Mobility Aid (Braces, Crutches, Walker)	14	< 1	14	< 1
Alternative Communication (Sign)	9	< 1	7	< 1
Communication Aid (Hearing Aid)	10	< 1	8	< 1
Communication Aid (Fm System)	28	< 1	18	< 1
Alternative and Augmented Communication	35	< 1	11	< 1
Alternative Communication (Braille)	2	< 1	2	< 1
Special Transportation	16	< 1	15	< 1
Adapted Furniture	19	< 1	6	< 1
Life Skills Training	219	2	44	< 1
Special Materials	41	< 1	29	< 1
Assistive Devices	84	1	65	1
Monitoring/Administration of Medication	121	1	118	1
Alternative Activities for Medical Conditions	56	1	53	1

2000 Survey – Highest Support Demands

34% – Tutorial/homework assistance

23% – Small group instruction

33% – Program modification to accommodate difficulty in learning

32% – Individual instruction

In the current survey, these needs were being met for a much higher proportion of students (68% to 90%) with the exception of the need for tutorial/homework assistance where only one-third of those requiring the support were receiving it.

It is interesting to note that in the 1993 survey it was estimated that 13% of students required an IEP and that 6% of the student population was on an IEP. These percentages were considerably less in the 2000 survey, with teachers reporting that 6% of the population required IEPs and that 4% had IEPs developed and being implemented. The 1993 survey did not record the number of students requiring program modification for difficulty in learning. Since 1993, there has been much more emphasis in schools on strategies for, and implementation of, program modifications to meet the diverse learning needs of students. It would appear that as a consequence, the proportion of students requiring an IEP has been reduced.

Personal counselling services were provided to 11% of students in 1993. In addition, it was one of the most frequently required supports (23% of students). Although the procedure for gathering information on personal counselling in 2000 was somewhat different from the one used in the previous survey, it is estimated that counselling was provided to approximately 12% of students in the 1999-2000 school year and that 28% of students required this support. These figures are very similar in both surveys.

Both surveys gathered information on planned interventions designed to assist students in learning appropriate behaviours. In 1993, these were referred to as Behaviour Management Plans and in 2000, as Planned Behavioural Interventions or Support. In 1993, the proportion of individual students supported for behaviour was 5% compared to 12% in 2000. Those requiring support represent 10% and 19% in 1993 and 2000 respectively. Clearly the need for individual behavioural intervention and support has increased markedly between 1993 and 2000.

In today's classrooms, nearly one in five students require support in this area.

Provision of specialized rehabilitation and medical services is a major focus in student support. These services include speech and language services, vision, and occupational and physical therapy. The service demands in this area were similar in the 1993 and 2000 surveys with the exception of speech and language services. In the 2000 survey, 9% of students were reported as requiring this service and 5% of students were receiving the service. In the 1993 survey, it was estimated that about one-half as many students required the service and only one-quarter of those were receiving any service.

Students requiring personal assistance and special equipment represent a small proportion of the student population as well as the total need for support.

Figure 6
Service Gap between Students Requiring and Receiving Supports 1993 and 2000
Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000

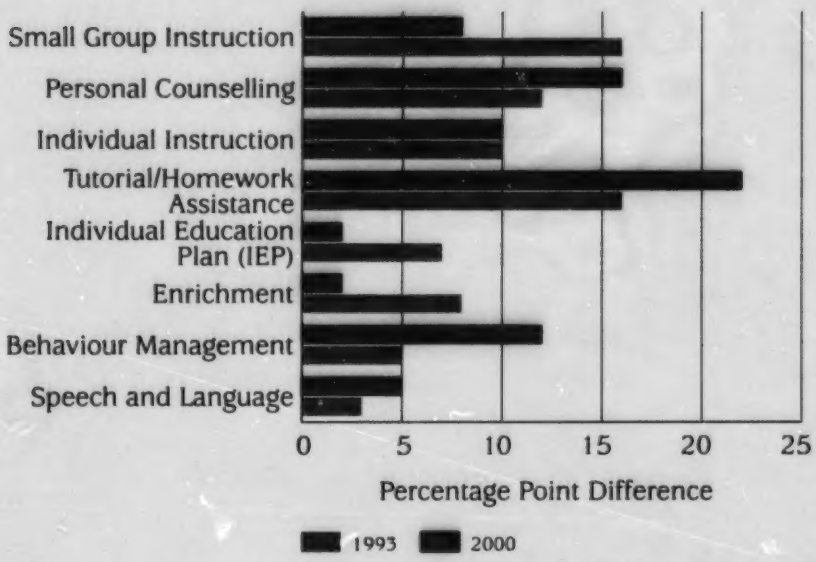


Figure 6 compares the difference between the percentage of students requiring supports and receiving supports reported in both 1993 and 2000.

In four of the eight supports where measurable comparisons can be made between the 1993 and 2000 data, the "service gap" is either lower in 2000 or, in the case of individual instruction, equal to 1993. In the remaining four cases, it is higher in the 2000 survey than in the 1993 survey.

The 1993 report examined the relationship between student support needs and grade level. Results were only available for a small sample. A general pattern was noted of increasing need for supports as grade level increases. In the 2000 survey, data was available for all schools. A similar pattern was found but the increase in needs with grade level was less marked. While the 1993 results report on grade levels k-3, 4-6 and 7-12, the 2000 survey looked at five grade groupings: k, 1-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. This latter breakdown pointed to grades 4-6 and 7-9 as the levels at which the need for supports is greatest.

Identification of Students Requiring Support

One source from which teachers sometimes obtain valuable assessment information on students entering school is from the screening of preschool children. Seventy-six percent (76%) of the schools with kindergarten classes report that a preschool screening program is available in their community. In 75% of cases, this screening program is run by the Public Health Team although other individuals and groups also participate in the process. These other participants include school personnel, DEC student support consultants and parents. A variety of screening instruments is used to provide information about physical and intellectual development, basic health status and, in about one-fifth of schools, screening for hearing, vision and speech functions. Twenty-five (25) of the 31 schools (81%) in communities where preschool screening takes place, report that the screening information for students entering kindergarten reaches the school in time to plan for the following school year.

Preschool screening for early identification of any developmental difficulties or conditions which might impede a child's learning is seen as being very important. The sharing of information from this screening provides information which can be used to plan the provision of student support as early as possible in the student's education.

Teachers report that they use a variety of methods for determining individual students' needs for support. Their decisions are most often based on the following:

- meeting with parents
- individual assessments
- documented class observations
- comments in school records
- discussions with previous teachers.

Several teachers note that they also consult with the students involved.

Assessments often play a key role in assisting teachers in identifying needs, in programming to meet students' needs and in providing supports to students. Teachers were asked to indicate which students had received an individual assessment for programming and/or supports. Twenty-three percent (23%) of all students were reported to have received an assessment. The primary service providers involved were education personnel such as program support teachers, classroom teachers and student support consultants. A significant number of assessments were also provided by medical doctors and educational psychologists.

In addition, teachers identified those students whom they felt needed to be assessed and the reasons for the assessment. Teachers reported that 27% of their students require individual assessment. Nineteen percent (19%) of students were reported to need assessment for academic reasons, 16% for behavioural/ social/emotional reasons and 5% for medical reasons. Some students are judged to require assessments in more than one area.

These teacher responses indicate that twice as many assessments were needed as have been conducted.

More formal assessments of students conducted within schools or by an education or heath or social services professional outside of the school system may or may not result in a confirmed diagnosis. In asking teachers to identify those students who had a confirmed diagnosis following assessment, interviewers applied the following definition: "School staff has on file written confirmation of a clinical diagnosis of a chronic condition, disease, disorder or disability whose effects impinge on the students' learning and/or behaviour."

Of the 2,190 students who had been assessed for academic or other reasons, teachers reported that 613 students or 28% of those assessed had a confirmed diagnosis of some kind.

The diagnosis that was most often confirmed was "Learning Disability" which accounted for 13% of all diagnoses. This was followed by "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder" (ADHD) at 10% and "Attention Deficit Disorder" (ADD) at 9%. No more than 1% of the total student population had a confirmed diagnosis in any given category. Table 4 shows the diagnostic categories accounting for 5% or more of the confirmed diagnoses made.

Table 4

Number of Students with Confirmed Diagnoses

Student Support Needs Assessment - 2000

Diagnostic Category	Number of Confirmed Diagnoses	% of All Confirmed Diagnoses
Learning Disability	109	13
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	84	10
Attention Deficit Disorder	72	9
Language Delay/Impairment	59	7
Memory Processing Delay	45	5
Auditory Processing Delay/Impairment	42	5

Several factors may influence not only how many students are referred for assessment and can be assessed, but also what diagnoses are confirmed on the basis of these assessments. There may be areas of student functioning that are a special focus of assessment and diagnoses in one or more jurisdictions that result in differential rates of identification of particular conditions, disorders or disabilities across the NWT. This, of course, is compounded by any difficulties schools or communities might have in gaining access to the appropriate professionals to assess students.

Teachers have indicated a need for more assessment services in order to better understand the learning needs of their students. It is important to note, however, that in the absence of assessment services, teachers are using a variety of strategies and approaches in an effort to support the diverse needs of students in their classrooms.

Classroom Support

Teachers identified the primary service providers for various supports and services surveyed.

Four major categories were used to group the supports and services considered in the needs assessment. These categories were Program Modification, Counselling and Behavioural Intervention, Specialized Rehabilitation and Medical Services and Personal Assistance and Special Equipment.

The 1993 report stated that "Primary delivery of the majority of support services is by the classroom teacher although in many cases several other school personnel may be involved." This statement is also largely true for the 2000 survey and is especially so when the areas of program modification, counselling and behavioural intervention are considered. Where specialized rehabilitation and medical services are provided, the role of the classroom teacher is less prominent but still evident. In some very specialized areas such as occupational therapy or services for the hard of hearing, the specialists in these disciplines are the major service providers. However, since students receiving these services are integrated into the classroom for instruction and other activities, the classroom teacher and support staff play a significant role not only in providing instruction, but also in implementing any accommodations recommended by other service professionals.

In providing student support, education/support assistants and program support teachers (PSTs) are most often the major secondary support in the classroom. The program support teacher provides central in-school support for inclusive schooling. As well, the PST acts as an instructional leader and provides support to teachers as they modify curricula goals, create programs that are responsive to the diverse needs of students and monitor student success. But depending upon the type of support needed, a wide range of other service providers are used. For example, other classroom teachers often assist their colleagues. The role of parents is also significant in providing assistance with classwork and homework.

Table 5 shows, for each service/support area, the primary providers of service.

Table 5
Primary Providers of Supports to Students
Student Support Needs Assessment - 2000

Support/Service	Primary Provider
Program Modification	
Individual Education Plan	Classroom Teacher
Program Modification (Difficulty)	Classroom Teacher
Program Modification (Enrichment)	Classroom Teacher
Assistance with Classwork/Homework	
Small Group Instruction	Classroom Teacher
Individual Instruction	Classroom Teacher
Work Experience/Life Skills	Classroom Teacher
Tutorial Assistance	Classroom Teacher
Counselling and Behavioural Intervention	
Attendance Counselling	Classroom Teacher
Behavioural Intervention (Individual)	Classroom Teacher
Behavioural Intervention (Group)	Classroom Teacher
Specialized Rehabilitation and Medical Services	
Speech and Language Therapy	Speech Pathologist
Occupational Therapy	Occupational Therapist
Physiotherapy	Physiotherapist
Hard of Hearing/Deaf	Audiologist
Visually Impaired/Blind	Vision Specialist
Personal Assistance and Special Equipment	
Personal Care	Education/Support Assistant
Mobility	Education/Support Assistant
Life Skills Training	Education/Support Assistant and Classroom Teacher
Monitoring/Administration of Medication	Classroom Teacher
Alternative Activities for Medical Conditions	Classroom Teacher

Teachers are the prime providers of supports to students in their classrooms. Given the very high service demands for such supports, it is clear that many classroom teachers are expending much time and energy giving support to students.

Teachers were asked to elaborate on the strategies they use to modify and adapt programs to meet the needs of their students. Their responses were examined for key themes or characteristics.

For the most part, teachers across the NWT employed a range of teaching approaches that can be described as differentiated or

multi-level in focus. Such strategies recognize that some students may require that instructional materials be modified for their use, perhaps to reflect a level of understanding that is either below or above that of the class as a whole. Others need additional practice or more time to complete tasks than their classmates. These practices are the ones used most often by teachers across all schools. In addition, teachers implement various grouping strategies in their classrooms as a means of meeting the needs of their students. Small group work, one-on-one interactions, groupings to reflect particular interests and developed on the basis of particular needs are some of the strategies used. Teachers also report that they tailor student assignments to reflect different levels of thinking or task complexity and also vary the quantity of work assigned to targeted students.

Assistance to Teachers in the Classroom

Although classroom teachers are the main providers of supports and services in the classroom, they do receive assistance from a number of sources. In this survey teachers were asked to specify the amount of time various individuals spent working with students and teachers in classrooms, whether on a weekly, monthly or as needed basis.

Sixty-four percent (64%) of classroom teachers reported that they received assistance from at least one education/support assistant. Overall, these assistants spend an average of 12 hours per week in the classroom. However, 36 classrooms (9%) had at least one assistant working a minimum of 30 hours per week. There were 47 classrooms (12%) that had at least two education/support assistants providing assistance for nine hours weekly on average. Nine classrooms had three assistants providing assistance for an average of six hours weekly.

Education/support assistants provide, by far, the greatest amount of support to teachers on a regular basis. However, program support teachers (PST) provide considerable part-time support to classroom teachers. Of all classrooms, 29% receive assistance from PSTs for an average of 3.6 hours per week. Approximately the same percentage (25%) of classrooms were able to call on a PST as needed. Other teachers also provide support to their colleagues, on an average of 5.6 hours each week. This support was provided to 20% of classrooms.

Parent volunteers assist teachers either on a regular basis or are

available if needed. Parents who assist weekly do so for 4.6 hours on average. Those who volunteer monthly spend an average of 6.4 hours per month. In total, 18% of teachers reported receiving regular support from parent volunteers.

Peer support is a resource that is often overlooked, either within the same classroom or from another class. A number of teachers (10%) report utilizing support from students in their classes on a regular weekly basis for about four hours per week. Students from other classes regularly offer assistance in 13% of classrooms for approximately three hours weekly. Teachers find this type of assistance to be beneficial to both the student receiving support and the one providing it.

A variety of other more specialized supports are offered to teachers. These include support from counsellors and DEC/DEA consultants. These professionals are generally available to the teacher as needed rather than providing services on a regular weekly or monthly schedule.

Availability of Service Providers to Schools

Support services to students are also provided by personnel from agencies outside the education system. The degree of involvement of such personnel is dependent on how accessible and available they are to schools.

School personnel were asked to report on the availability of a wide range of services and service providers, either within or outside their communities. Of a list of 29 services providers, varying from medical specialists to the fire department, 16 of them were identified as available locally by at least 90% of Yellowknife schools. In Regional Centres, all schools but one, indicated that 10 of the services were available in their community. Among smaller communities, only two service providers, nurse/community health representative and the fire department were reportedly available locally to more than 75% of their schools. Table 6 shows, for communities outside of Yellowknife, the proportion of schools which have various services and service providers available in their communities or accessible elsewhere.

Outside of Yellowknife, limited services for hearing and vision were available locally. Medical specialty services, all categories of psychological and psychotherapeutic specialty services available from qualified personnel, as well as speech and language services were reported limited outside of major centres.

Table 6

Availability and Accessibility of Service Providers in Communities other than Yellowknife

Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000

Services Required and Service Providers	Available in Community (% of schools)	Available as Visiting Service (% of schools)	Accessed Outside Community (% of schools)
Physical Disease/Disability			
Nurse/CHR	78	16	16
Medical Doctor	30	46	43
Medical Specialist	5	24	57
Multidisciplinary Medical Team	3	3	51
Occupational Therapist	11	16	35
Physiotherapist	16	5	41
Hearing			
Audiologist	-	22	43
Oral Educator/Hearing Specialist	-	8	30
Sign Language Specialist	-	3	19
Vision			
Eye Team	-	46	43
Vision Specialist	-	11	43
Speech/Language			
Speech and Language Pathologist	3	43	51
Learning			
Educational Psychologist	5	3	38
Social/Emotional/Behavioural			
Alcohol/Drug Worker	65	5	24
Mental Health Worker	38	8	24
Counsellor	54	3	16
Social Worker	68	5	35
Clinical Psychologist	11	16	46
Psychiatrist	3	5	43
Psychotherapist	-	5	32
Addictions Counsellor	46	3	24
Community Services			
Probation Officer	49	-	16
Youth Court Worker	46	3	27
Community Support Worker	32	3	5
Income Support Worker	57	5	19
Child Care Worker	46	-	22
Home Care Worker	62	-	-
R.C.M.P.	68	14	27
Fire Department	95	3	3

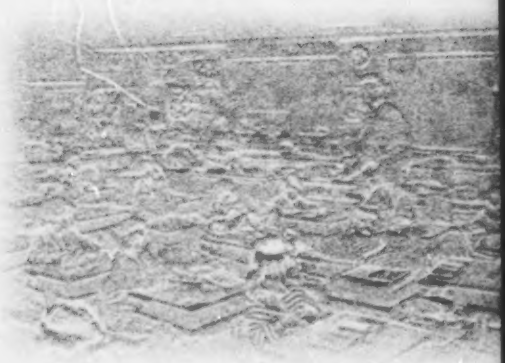
There is considerable variation between the level of service provision in Yellowknife and communities outside of Yellowknife. Nevertheless, it is also clear that not all school personnel were aware of what services are available, either in their own community or elsewhere. Whether this knowledge is available in the school would depend upon factors such as how knowledgeable school staff is about the community and in some cases, on whether the name used for the service provider in the survey is the one employed in the community. As noted earlier in this report with respect to the issue of assessment and diagnosis, the limited availability of professionals qualified to conduct the assessments necessary for school programming is seen as placing substantial constraints on many schools.

Comparisons with 1993 Survey

To the extent that the current survey results can be compared with the data gathered in 1993, it appears that the situation is largely unchanged. In the 2000 survey, the list of services and service providers was expanded to include a wider range of community service professionals and service providers. These include workers in the justice system, home care and child care, income support, R.C.M.P and fire departments. For the most part, these services are now available in close to 50% of localities.

Students who Require the Most Time, Energy and Resources

Following the collection of the detailed information on the supports provided to each student and any current unmet needs, teachers were asked to "Indicate which students, if any, require the most time, energy and resources to support." This section of the report examines some of the characteristics of the group of students identified. This is not an attempt to create a new category of students, but rather to try to better understand the nature of the challenges presented to teachers in the classroom.



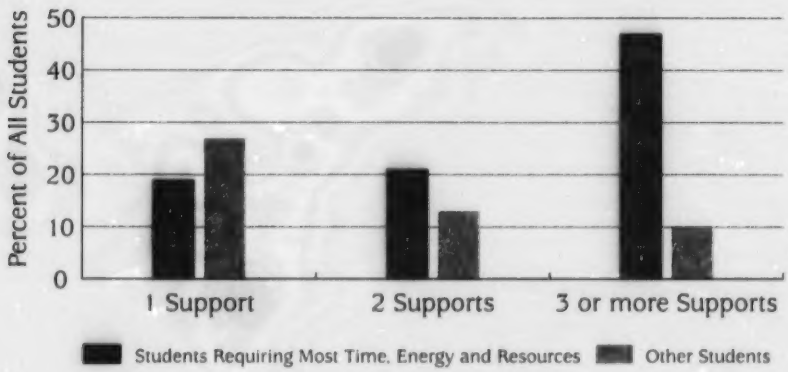
A total of 2,872 students (30% of the student population) was identified as "requiring the most time, energy and resources to support". Approximately two-thirds of them (65%) are males, compared to the 52% male composition of the school population as a whole.

One-fifth (584) of these students had attendance rates below 60%. By comparison, this is two and one-half times the rate of other

students. This is coupled with a rate of suspension of 11% in contrast to the 4% rate associated with the remainder of the school population.

Students requiring the most time, energy and resources to support are receiving a greater number of supports to assist them in their learning (Figure 7).

Figure 7
Percent of Students Receiving Different Levels of Support by Type
Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000



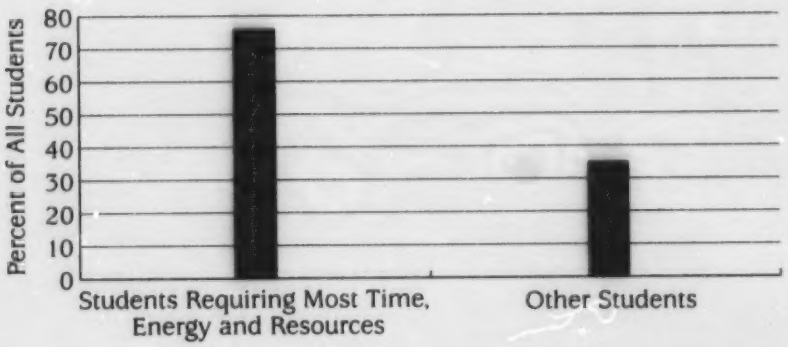
The degree to which they require and/or receive support is greater than that of the remainder of the student body with close to one-half (47%) receiving three or more supports. These students reportedly require assessments at over three times the rate of other students. More than one-third of them had been assessed and this is over twice the rate for other students. Eighty percent (80%) of students on IEPs were identified as belonging to this group. While 10% of students requiring the most time, energy and resources to support were on IEPs, the rate for all other students was 1%.

Thirteen percent (13%) of students requiring the most time, energy and resources to support were reported as not currently receiving any specific supports. Teachers commented that many in this group are very poor attenders, making it difficult to put supports in place and sustain them. Of these 363 students, 71% have been identified as needing support, with the largest proportion requiring three or more supports.

Many teachers identified student behaviour as a particular concern

in their classrooms and it is worth noting that the students requiring the most time, energy and resources to support receive individual behavioural intervention at a rate four times greater than that of other students. Additionally, their needs in this area were 17% compared with 3% for other students. This suggests that a significant component of the time, energy and resources devoted to these students is directed towards dealing with behavioural issues. Program modification to accommodate difficulty in learning, provision of small group instruction, individual instruction and tutorial/homework assistance were all directed towards these students in greater proportion than was true for others.

Figure 8
Percent of Students Requiring Additional Supports by Type
Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000



Teachers felt that despite the considerable proportion of support and services directed towards these students, 74% of them still require additional supports (Figure 8). In addition, the support that was being offered was judged to be having at least some effect in only 53% of cases, compared with an overall rate of 71%. This means that the considerable time, energy and resources being directed to these students are having little effect for nearly half of them.

Students with Special Needs

Inclusive schooling is committed to recognizing and supporting the diversity of needs within the student population, including those who have special needs. Within the NWT education system, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) represents the most significant modification that is undertaken to accommodate the instructional needs of students. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is generally

the means used to ensure that students with special needs receive an education that is appropriate for them and that will maximize their learning.

In the 2000 survey, teachers identified a total of 343 students, comprising 4% of the student population, for whom they had developed Individual Education Plans (IEPs). These students form the core of the student population with greatest needs. This can be confirmed by noting the following characteristics. It was shown previously that 80% of students on IEPs were identified by their teachers as requiring significantly more time, energy and resources to support than others. Similarly, 81% of students on IEPs were receiving three or more supports. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of them had been assessed, compared to 23% of all students.

A number of students, in addition to those requiring IEPs, are diagnosed with a variety of conditions which require schools to provide supports in a variety of areas. These may include speech and language therapy, services for the hard of hearing or deaf, services for the visually impaired or blind, as well as assistance with personal care. Excluding the students on IEPs who have had a confirmed diagnosis, 457 other students have been diagnosed with conditions which may require them to receive assistance.

An estimate of the population of special needs students can be made by adding the number of students who are currently on IEPs and those students who have a confirmed diagnosis as a result of an assessment and require services but are not currently on an IEP. These 800 students constitute 8.3% of the current student enrolment.

Teachers' Priorities for Student Support

Teachers were asked to identify the three priorities for student support in their school based on their knowledge of the needs of the students in their classes. The priorities which teachers identified were grouped into nine categories based on their primary focus. The categories were:

Issues to be Addressed

This category contained issues primarily related to student needs which teachers felt needed to be addressed, but to which they did not always offer possible solutions. The concerns raised most frequently were student behaviour, attendance and tardiness/ punctuality.

Trained Support/Services Personnel

By far the largest number of responses were generated in this category. Teachers expressed the need for greater classroom support as well as other professional support in the areas of counselling, assessment and reading.

Staff Development

Very few responses were generated in this category. The most frequent responses were related to program modification.

Materials/Resources

Here, teachers identified needs for, or use of, materials or resources that would allow them to respond to the student support needs in their classes. General issues related to funding for equipment and materials and for increased space were noted. The need for resources in language arts was the most frequently reported.

Programs

Issues surrounding school curricula and programs were classified in this category. There was a call for increased emphasis to be placed on reading/literacy. In addition, a number of teachers expressed the view that there was need for other, more appropriate, programs for their students. As well, the needs of students who require enrichment were also presented.

Alternative Programs/Strategies

While the previous category focused primarily on NWT curricula, this category attempted to capture those comments that referred to programs or strategies designed to meet the needs of selected groups of students. Early intervention programs were by far the most frequently identified response to the perceived needs. This included preschool programs as well as programs in the primary grades.

Organization/Administration

Reduced class size, changes in pupil/teacher ratio, were the overwhelming recommendations found here. Related to this was a desire of some teachers for more homogeneous classes. Teachers also expressed the need for more time to plan, prepare and collaborate.

Parents

A range of parental activity, such as volunteering in school, helping with homework, encouraging students to be punctual and to attend

school, was suggested as being beneficial to students. It was also noted that the school and community had a role to play in supporting parents in meeting their responsibilities.

Community

Teacher comments recognized the need for education to be supported and valued by the community.

Unavoidably, the process of summarizing the responses of teachers results in a loss of some of the details in their comments. However, the top five priorities identified overall were:

- trained classroom support staff
- counsellors in the school
- reduced class size or pupil/teacher ratio
- Program Support Teacher
- parental support to students (valuing education, volunteering in schools, assisting with homework).

It must be emphasized that in identifying classroom support staff as their highest priority for meeting the needs of their students, teachers were careful to point out the importance of having trained personnel working in the classroom. In many cases, they identified training in areas such as behavioural intervention, small group instruction, language instruction or some other area to which assistance could be directed.

Comparisons with 1993 Survey

The top five priorities for student support identified by teachers in the 1993 survey were:

- counsellors/counselling services in the school
- more support staff in classrooms and schools to assist in program planning and implementation
- more individual and small group instruction in the classroom
- assistance with behaviour modification strategies, anger management, and management of disruptive students
- tutorial/homework assistance

The top two priorities remain the same in the 2000 survey as they were in 1993, with the need for trained support staff in the classroom moving to the top. The need for more individual and small group instruction, the number three priority listed in 1993, does not appear in the 2000 survey. As discussed earlier in this report, the provision of individual and small group instruction has made great gains in the years following 1993, with significant narrowing of the gap between the need for

service and the provision of service. On the other hand, the call of teachers in the 2000 survey for reduced class size or reduced pupil/teacher ratio could be seen as a step towards further accomplishing the goal of providing even more individual and small group support to their students.

In the 1993 survey, teachers specifically identified the need for assistance with behavioural issues. This need is not one of the top five priorities for teachers in the 2000 survey. This should not necessarily be interpreted to mean that teachers do not need support in this area. Overall, behaviour problems were the sixth most frequent response.

Tutorial/homework assistance has increased since the 1993 survey, when teachers noted this as a priority area. While teachers have provided increased support, they also reported a more rapidly increasing requirement for support.

Teachers were given the opportunity to provide other comments. Overall, these comments fell into the same groupings as their responses to the priorities question. The issue that generated the most comments was the need for communities to support and value education. Parental support for students and the school, as well as reciprocal support of parents by school and community was also mentioned. Some other themes were reiterated, such as the need for trained support staff in classrooms and behaviour, attendance and tardiness concerns within the student population.

Beyond the top five priorities for student support which teachers identified, three that appeared with equal frequency are reading/literacy needs, attendance and tardiness of students and behaviour problems.

Reading/Literacy

Reading and literacy are significant because of their link to student success. Information was gathered on student academic performance in addition to the information on student needs. Teachers provided a rating of how well each student was performing in Reading, Writing and Mathematics and the overall ratings are provided below in three categories. These three ratings were derived from a more detailed rating scale employing five categories. The percent of students reported by teachers to be performing at each of these levels in the three subject areas is shown in Table 7.

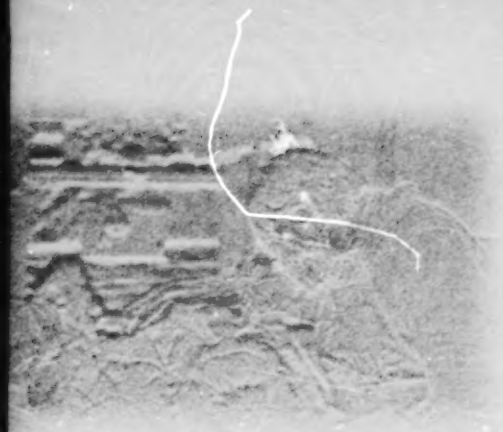


Table 7
Teacher Ratings of Student Performance
Student Support Needs Assessment – 2000

Performance Rating	Reading %	Writing %	Mathematics %
At or Above Grade Level	54	49	59
Less than One Year Below Grade Level	21	24	21
One Year or More Below Grade Level	25	27	20

Across the NWT, performance in mathematics receives a somewhat better rating than reading or writing although the differences are not very dramatic. When the ratings are examined for different types of communities, it is clear that the level of performance in reading and writing is not uniform across the territory. However, teachers' concerns regarding reading and literacy were independent of the communities in which they teach.

The fact that teachers have focused their comments on reading and literacy, as opposed to other academic areas, suggests that they consider these to be the foundation to progress in other subjects. Teachers call for a greater emphasis on literacy in the early grades and support in delivering reading programs as priorities for student support.

Attendance and Tardiness

Teachers indicated that it is very difficult to teach and support students who have sporadic attendance and/or are habitually late for school. As reported earlier, 29% of students attend school less than 80% of the time. In addition, tardiness is considered to be a problem for 24% of students. Reasons for these behaviours are complex and may be related to factors in the student's home or personal life or may involve a deliberate choice not to attend school on particular days. Teachers reported that 22% of students needed counselling about attendance issues and that fewer than half of these students were receiving such counselling. For some students, non-attendance may be related to lack of success and progress in school. Choosing not to attend, however, usually intensifies the problem and makes learning more difficult and the need for supports greater.

Behaviour

Many different aspects of the data gathered point to a concern with behaviour difficulties. Instances of inappropriate behaviour in school and on the playground are often based in poor relationship

and anger management skills. Teachers reported that approximately 25% of students do not exhibit age appropriate skills in these areas. In addition, many students are facing social-emotional issues or trauma in their lives outside of school which may interfere with their learning and their relationships. Inappropriate behaviour may be a consequence of unresolved personal conflict. Teachers reported that 28% of students require counselling for personal issues and that, as far as they are aware, only 12% are receiving some. Teachers listed counselling as the second highest priority for student support. Research has shown that students' inappropriate behaviour is often linked to lack of academic success. Given the overall academic performance levels reported by teachers, it is clear that, even with support in place for a significant proportion of students, lack of academic success is a reality for many. Focusing on increasing the fundamental literacy skills of students, as suggested above, might indeed assist in reducing behaviour problems.

Preschool Participation

Teachers, in their comments about alternative programs and strategies, stressed the importance of early intervention programs. Although data was not collected specifically on early intervention, the following data on preschool participation points to the possible influence of participation in preschool programs on performance in kindergarten.

For purposes of this survey, a preschool program was defined as including daycare, head-start, and nursery school programs, but not day home or private babysitting arrangements.

In the 2000 survey, kindergarten teachers were asked to identify those students who had participated in a preschool program. Of the 692 kindergarten students reported on across the NWT, 339 (49%) of them were known to have been enrolled in preschool. Another 190 (27%) had not attended preschool. For the remaining 24%, teachers either did not provide the information on preschool or were unsure if students had attended preschool.

As was the case for other students, teachers provided ratings of the performance of kindergarten students in the skills related to reading, writing, and mathematics. This allowed for a comparison between the rating for students who had attended preschool and those who had not. While 69% of kindergarten students who had attended preschool were judged to be "at or above grade level"

overall, only 59% of their peers who had not attended preschool achieved this rating from their teachers.

Participation in preschool programs is considered to be beneficial to the academic achievement and social development of children. The possible impact of such participation on NWT students is only suggested from the results of this survey. Follow-up data gathered on this group of kindergarten students could help to determine the true effect of preschool programs on students in the NWT system.

Implications

Summary and Conclusions

The most compelling picture presented by this Student Support Needs Assessment is the extent to which NWT educational jurisdictions, schools and teachers have progressed in implementing programs and services to meet the diverse needs of students. Compared with the 1993 survey, when this direction became the focus of Departmental activity, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of the school population receiving support.

Teachers' identification of their priorities for support in classrooms and schools appear to reflect a continued commitment to inclusive schooling. They appear to be saying that inclusive schooling can work but the supports must be available in appropriate quantity and kind for this to happen. From their comments, teachers recognize that educating children is not only the domain of the school. Calls for greater community and parental involvement in schooling confirm this recognition. This is not a "one-way street". As part of the larger community, schools and the education community as a whole have a role to play in fostering the interactions among school, community and parents.

The lack of supports for schools in the areas of community-based professional services is largely unchanged from seven years ago. The need for counselling and assessment services could be described as critical in some areas, While in-school counselling services, as called for by many teachers, will be of great benefit, such services alone are not likely to respond to the counselling needs of students in light of the fact that issues which affect their school progress are related to community and family situations. Solutions must be sought at that level also.

Training and/or the recruitment of trained classroom support staff is seen as fundamental to being able to provide the many adaptations and modifications to programs in which teachers are engaged. Many individuals assist in the classroom, but the core of this assistance is the education/support assistant. Increasing the number of assistants is essential. Ensuring that the assistants are trained and able to support program delivery is critical.

Teachers made few comments in this survey about professional development and in-service training, perhaps because this was not

specifically addressed. When school administrative staff were asked to identify staff development priorities relative to meeting the needs of all students, they listed three areas: behaviour management, teaching strategies (particularly focused on multi-level/multi-grade situations) and early literacy. Given the priorities teachers identified for student support, staff development priorities are clearly complementary. They serve to highlight, once again, the importance of providing support to schools and teachers in dealing with behaviour problems, classroom diversity and early intervention to improve the chances of student success.

Next Steps

Teachers, school administrators and DEA staff have provided their observations, opinions and recommendations on the present conditions and challenges surrounding student support in NWT schools. The main findings have been presented in this report along with some indications of the responses required to address the needs identified. This input comes at a pivotal point in the process of planning and refocusing within the Department to meet the challenges presented by the realities of a new territory and a new century. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment will use the data gathered in the Student Support Needs Assessment as the foundation for its future planning for student support.

More detailed findings will be available in a Technical Report which will present complete summary data based on all the responses to the Classroom Profile, the School/Community Profile, and a summary of the submissions made by each DEC/DEA. As well, jurisdictional data will be provided to each DEC/DEA in a format similar to that of the Technical Report.

Building on the directions mapped out in new strategic documents and legislated financial commitments, the Department is developing action plans to foster the well-being and academic progress of all children in NWT schools. As this report emphasized, the needs presented by students are not only broad in scope, but at times deeply rooted and complex. Responses must be found that are appropriate to the identified needs of students. This calls for strategies that will encourage cooperation and collaboration among parents, educators, educational jurisdictions and other agencies outside the school.

Although not explored in depth in this report, the information presented here supports conclusions drawn from other resources that students' academic performance is influenced by many factors inside and outside the classroom. While social, emotional and sometimes physical supports are critical for ensuring the well-being of students, instructional supports cannot be overlooked. Increased interaction between pupil and teacher and alternative delivery methods that are responsive to differences in the way students learn, are approaches that teachers have put forward for meeting student needs. These should form part of any plan of action for improving the school process and outcomes for students.

Data from the Student Support Needs Assessment 2000 have provided insight into the process of delivery of student supports as well as the needs still to be met. The report should serve now as one of the important elements in planning for change, both at the Department and district levels, for the immediate future and for the years ahead.

Appendices

DEC _____

School _____

Class _____

Interviewer _____

Student Support Needs Assessment
Classroom Profile
2000

CONFIDENTIAL

Education, Culture and Employment

1. **What is the school registar or the official description of your class?**

		Grade(s)
Single grade	_____	_____
Split grade	_____	_____
Non-graded grouping	_____	_____
Multi-age/family grouping	_____	_____
Alternate class	_____	_____
Other (please describe)		
_____	_____	

2. **How many students are registered in your class, as of today's date?**____

3. **What is the age range, in years, of students in your class?**

   Age ____ to Age ____

4. **Is instruction in a language other than English?** Yes ____ No ____

   If YES please indicate.

   Aboriginal First Language _____ Specify _____
   French First Language _____
   French Immersion _____

5. **Template for use with class list.**
   Specific instructions to be provided by the interviewer.

   Students receiving supports and services.
   Students needing supports and services but not receiving them.
   Individuals involved in providing supports and services.

DEC _____

School _____

Class _____

This list is to be removed at the end of the interview and kept at the school.

ALL STUDENTS

	Student Name
01	
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DEC ____ School ____ Class ____

Student Data

Student Code	Sex (M or F)	Approximate attendance A = over 80% B = 80 - 80% C = less than 80%	(If less than 80%...) Absences primarily due to A = illness/medical intervention B = lack of support in school C = suspensions D = lack of support at home E = family responsibilities F = chooses not to attend G = on the land H = extended weekends/vacation I = other (specify)	Check (✓) students for whom tardiness is an issue	Participation in Pre-school Program (for Kindergarten teachers only) A = yes B = no C = don't know	Parental/guardian involvement appropriate to student's needs A = very appropriate B = somewhat appropriate C = not appropriate (over-involved) D = not appropriate (under-involved)
01						
02						
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Personal Skills

Check (✓) which students demonstrate skills below age expectations in the following areas:

	Organizing work	Focusing and staying on task	Relating to others	Anger management	Problem solving/decision-making
01					
02	■	■	■	■	■
03					
04	■	■	■	■	■
05					
06	■	■	■	■	■
07					
08	■	■	■	■	■
09					
10	■	■	■	■	■
11					
12	■	■	■	■	■
13					
14	■	■	■	■	■
15					
16	■	■	■	■	■
17					
18	■	■	■	■	■
19					
20	■	■	■	■	■
21					
22	■	■	■	■	■
23					
24	■	■	■	■	■
25					
26	■	■	■		■
27					
28	■	■	■	■	■
29					
30	■	■	■	■	■
31					
32	■	■	■	■	■
33					
34	■	■	■	■	■
35					

Academic Skills

Rate the following:
A = above grade expectations
B = at grade expectations
C = no more than 1 year below grade
D = no more than 2 years below grade
E = more than 2 years below grade

	Reading	Writing	Mathematics	Designated Grade Placement (e.g. Gr. 1, Gr. 5, Gr. 9...)	If high school, indicate most frequent course sequence: A = 10 - 20 - 30 B = 13 - 23 - 33 C = 16 - 26 D = other
01					
02	■	■	■	■	■
03					
04	■	■	■	■	■
05					
06	■	■	■	■	■
07					
08	■	■	■	■	■
09					
10	■	■	■	■	■
11					
12	■	■	■	■	■
13					
14	■	■	■	■	■
15					
16	■	■	■	■	■
17					
18	■	■	■	■	■
19					
20	■	■	■	■	■
21					
22	■	■	■	■	■
23					
24	■	■	■	■	■
25					
26	■	■	■	■	■
27					
28	■	■	■	■	■
29					
30	■	■	■	■	■
31					
32	■	■	■	■	■
33					
34	■	■	■	■	■
35					

DEC ____ School ____ Class ____

Assessment

Student Code	Individual assessment for programming and/or supports	If needed, indicate reasons for assessment: A = academic B = behaviour/social/emotional M = medical O = other	Confirmed diagnosis A = yes; indicate what the diagnosis is B = no C = don't know
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R = Code = receiving
N = needs
DK = don't know

Program Modification

R + Code = receiving: indicate D = documented U = undocumented N = needs	Individual Education Plan (IEP) (school or DEC criteria)	Years on IEP (number of years or don't know)	Individual Education Plan (IEP) (EDE definition) Y = yes N = no	Program modification or adaptation for difficulty learning (documented) (undocumented)	Program modification or adaptation for enrichment (documented) (undocumented)
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DEC _____ School _____ Class _____

Assistance with Classwork and Homework in Addition to that Provided to Whole Class

Counselling and Behavioural Intervention

Student Code	Small group instruction or work	Individual instruction or work	Work experience/life skills training	Tutorial/homework assistance (outside of class time)
01				
02				
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R + Code = receiving
N = needs

	Attendance counselling	Planned behavioural intervention or support (individual)	Planned behavioural intervention or support (group)
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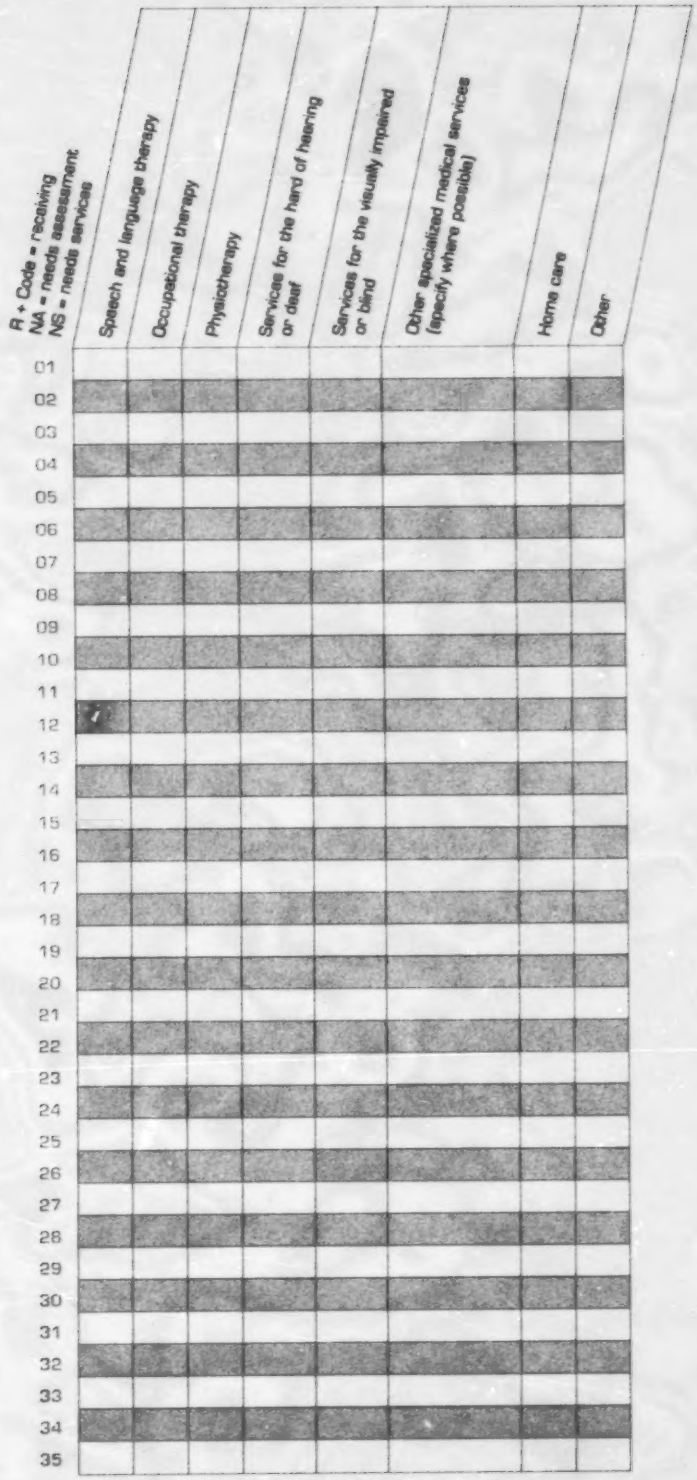
Specialized Rehabilitation and Medical Services



Personal Assistance and Special Equipment

DEC _____ School _____ Class _____

R = Code = receiving
N = needs

Student Code	Assistance with personal care	Assistance with mobility	Mobility aid (wheelchair)	Mobility aid (braces, crutches, walker)	Alternative communication (sign)	Communication aid (hearing aid)	Communication aid (FM system)	Alternative and augmented communication (communication board, computer)	Alternative communication (braille)
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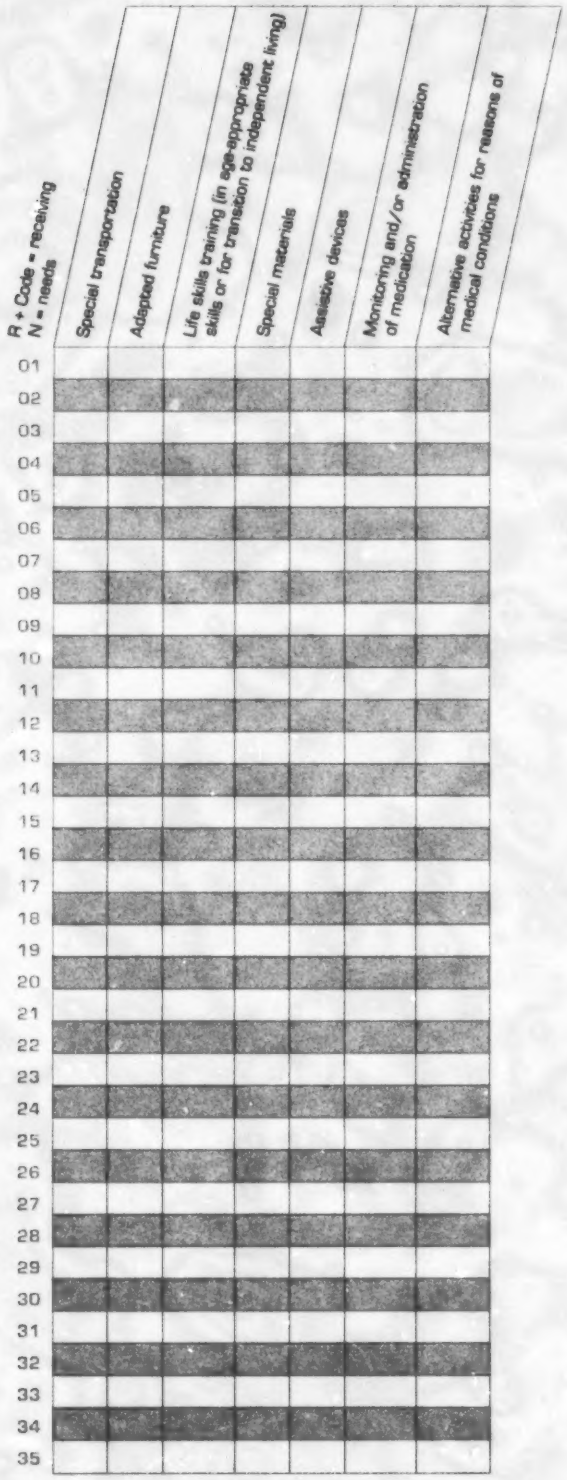
Personal Assistance Continued



Summary

DEC _____ School _____ Class _____

Student Code	For those students who are receiving support(s), rate the adequacy as: A = adequate support for progress in learning B = needs more of what is in place	Rate the effectiveness of support/ services in place for the student as: A = large effect on student progress B = some effect on student progress C = little effect on student progress	Indicate which students, if any, require the most time, energy and resources to support
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6. **In your opinion, how many students in your class need counselling to deal with personal issues and/or their relationships with others?**

_____

7. **Of the _____ students needing counselling, please indicate how many are:**

Receiving counselling _____
Not receiving counselling _____
Status unknown _____

8. **What are the issues that your students come to class with?**

_____
_____
_____
_____

9. **What do you do to adapt or modify programs for students who are experiencing difficulty or who need enrichment? (Can you name specific strategies that you use?)**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

10. **What did you do this school year to determine which of your students need additional supports and services?**

	Yes	No
Discussed with the previous teacher(s)	_____	_____
Discussed with the PST	_____	_____
Discussed with the Principal	_____	_____
Discussed at a School Team meeting	_____	_____
Discussed with DEC/DEA consultant	_____	_____
Read comments in the Student Record	_____	_____
Read reports on previous assessments, programs and services in the Program Support Record	_____	_____
Met with the parents	_____	_____
Documented class observations	_____	_____
Conducted class assessment(s)	_____	_____
Conducted individual assessments (formal/informal)	_____	_____
Other (please describe) _____	_____	_____

11. Which of the following people work with you *on a regular basis in the school* to support individual students?

For each person listed, please indicate the time spent working with students and teachers and whether they work in the classroom or elsewhere in the school or both.

	Time Available (check ✓)				
	Hrs/Wk	or	Hrs/Mo	or	As needed
Support Assistant(s)					
PST					
Principal					
Vice-principal					
Another teacher					
Counsellor (SCC)					
Counsellor (Guidance)					
Tutor					
Parent volunteer(s)					
Community members					
Elders					
Students in your class					
Other students					
DEC/DEA Consultant					
Other (please describe)					
_____					

12. In your opinion, based on the needs of the students in your class, what are the three priorities for student support in your school? (If you identify an issue/problem, can you suggest a solution?)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

13. Any other comments: